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SUBJECT: SITREP 23: PRESIDENT ARROYO LIFTS STATE OF EMERGENCY

REF: MANILA 970 AND PREVIOUS

¶1. (U) Summary: In a TV address given at 1130 hrs (local) on March 3, President Arroyo announced that she was lifting the State of National Emergency imposed on February 24, effective immediately. Mission prepared the statement in para 5 in response to media queries. This is the final sitrep in this series. End Summary.

¶2. (U) President Arroyo appeared on national television mid-day to announce that she was immediately lifting the State of National Emergency. (See Para 6 for the full text of President Arroyo's announcement.) The office of the Executive Secretary will next issue an official proclamation that would supersede Proclamation 1017, which imposed the State of Emergency on February 24.

¶3. (U) During the ten-minute appearance, an upbeat, confident-looking Arroyo justified issuing Proclamation 1017, asserting it was necessary to "insure the stability of the people and the nation" in the face of a plot to bring down the government, which she characterized as being, at the time, "a clear and present danger to the Republic." President Arroyo noted that several "destabilizers" and members of the military and police had been arrested in connection with the alleged plot and she promised that they would receive a fair trial. She stated that she was "happy to report that the cabal is broken...I am confident that order has been restored. Therefore, with the power vested in me by our Constitution, I declare that, effective immediately, the state of emergency is no longer in effect." She closed by noting "and I will act with the same force of will and determination again and again if our opponents insist on inflicting instability on the nation and hurting our economy."

¶4. (U) House Speaker Jose De Venecia said in a televised interview shortly after the announcement that an "overwhelming majority" in Congress and among local government officials supported the President's decision to rescind Proclamation 1017, and he expressed skepticism that there would be further detentions or arrests. Former President Fidel Ramos also praised Arroyo for lifting the State of Emergency, but added that she had further explaining to do as to why it was imposed in the first place.

¶5. (U) Mission prepared the following statement, cleared by visiting EAP DAS John, in response to media queries:

"The United States welcomes President Arroyo's declaration today, lifting the State of National Emergency on February

¶24. We look forward to continuing to deepen our cooperation

on important issues that both our countries face, including counter-terrorism, regional cooperation and security, defense reform, and economic development."

16. (U) An official translation of the announcement by President Arroyo, delivered in Tagalog, follows:

Begin Text:

I was elected to fix our economy, invest in the people and eliminate the crushing burden of poverty. My plan is working and the economy has been turned around. Evidence of this is a strong peso, more foreign investments and increased collection of taxes to help pay for services like education, health care and infrastructure.

Against the backdrop of economic progress, elements with our society decided to launch an unsuccessful overthrow our government.

A week ago today an alliance of malicious destabilizers and misguided military intriguers set about to take advantage of the emotional swirl of our nation's EDSA celebration. Their intention was no less than the sabotage of our constitution and to bring down the legal government of the Philippines. I made the judgment at the time that this convergence of forces posed a clear and present danger to the Republic. As commander in chief of the armed forces and within the power granted me by the constitution, I took steps to insure the stability of the people and the nation.

My concerns were subsequently born out: we have arrested scores of destabilizers and several military personnel. We have documented case-by-case and in specific detail the

MANILA 00000995 002 OF 002

transgressions for which they now stand accused. Our justice system will see to their fair trail. The truth will come out. And as you saw play out last Sunday night, the struggle continued through the weekend. As such, I kept in place the SOE until I was sure the nation was safe and sound.

Throughout this ordeal, I have been keenly aware of the anxiety that the state of emergency created within many segments of society. It was not an action I took lightly, but I felt too much was at stake to do anything less, I believe my actions strengthened and protected our civil liberties and free press, and maintained the economic gains we have fought so hard to secure.

Today, a week later, I am happy to report that the cabal is broken and it is time to get back to the real business of governing. I am confident that order has been restored. Therefore, with the power vested in me by our constitution, I declare that, effective immediately, the state of emergency is no longer in affect.

I want to thank our military men and women who withstood the political gamesmen and remained true to the country that they swore to protect. They bear many burdens on our behalf. I have asked Defense Secretary Cruz to lead a bottom-up review to get the views of our soldiers in the field and make sure reform of the military continues on its course toward modernization and justice.

I want to thank our many local and national government leaders who stood by the side of democracy. And I cannot say enough about the wisdom of our people who understand that the best way to a bright future is through hard work, not taking to the streets.

It is essential now that our political opponents and opportunist stop undermining our economy at home and embarrassing the nation abroad with their cheap political antics. For the love of nation, it is time to make things work and get things done. Let us please all work for the

common good.

Our nation is stronger for dealing quickly and decisively with this issue. I will not stand for this kind of adventurism at any time. And I will act with the same force of will and determination again and again if our opponents insist on inflicting instability on the nation and hurting our economy.

In the meantime, we are blessed to live in a vibrant democracy that is strong, stable and on the move.

End Text.

17. (U) This is the final sitrep in this series.

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